

Former Division Director Dies | CPD

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06/17/2016



Dr. Richard N. Roberts, director of the CPD Research and Evaluation Division from 1989-2010, passed away June 10, 2016 in Utah. Roberts's career focused on children with special needs and their families, and he worked closely with the Maternal Child Health Bureau on many projects. During his time at the CPD, he published 3 books, 10 monographs, and was the principal investigator of 10 multi-year multi-site projects within the Early Intervention Research Institute, as well as directing numerous other state and regional projects. Prior to coming to Utah, Roberts was the director and founder of the Preschool Education Program for Native Hawaiian children in Honolulu. In 2000, Roberts was presented the Outstanding Achievement Award by the American Association of University Affiliated Programs. The previous year, he was recognized by the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services at Utah State University as the Scholar/Researcher of the Year. A memorial service will be held July 29 at 5:00 p.m. at the Logan First Presbyterian Church, 178 West Center, Logan Utah. The family asks that in lieu of flowers, donations be made in Richard's name to the [Alzheimer's Association](#). A complete obituary is available [here](#). Co-workers share some memories below.

"Rich will be forever be one of my greatest mentors but also my hero during the 9/11 tragic events. We were attending a MCH Tri-Regional meeting in Arizona during that time. Everyone was wanting to get home to their loved ones and I will say they we were truly blessed that we were only one state away from home but none the less, no one knew at that time when it would be safe for the airlines to be up and running again. As one of the many family leaders attending, my sole mission was to get back to my family and especially very medically complex and fragile son! Thankfully Rich had rented a car while he was staying in Arizona for the meetings but when he called to ask if he could keep it and drive it back to Utah, the agency said, 'absolutely not, it needed to be returned immediately!' Well..... this is one time that I am so grateful that someone BROKE the rules and I guess would even say stole a car regardless of what the penalties would be to get four of us back home safely. Rich was always a champion for true family involvement and was always helping me gain the skills and information needed to make a difference but in this case he proved to be more than a mentor, he recognized the extra anxiety of having a child with special health care needs put on the tragic events and took action! Rest in peace Rich, and I want your family to know that you made a difference in many lives of families of children with special health care needs!"
 –Gina Pola-Money, Utah Family Voices.

"I had the pleasure of working with Richard during his entire time here at the CPD. He was the Director of the Division and I was the Associate Director. Richard was a great colleague. His work to improve services for children with special needs and their families significantly improved services and was groundbreaking for the field.

His early work on home visiting, prior to coming to Utah, helped improve our understanding of the practice. As our Director, he was always ready to help with project planning and went out of his way to assist staff with any problems that arose. It was sad that Alzheimer's cut his career short. I will always remember our years working together positively. " –Dr. Mark Innocenti, CPD. "I really appreciated Rich introducing me to key people in the state when I first began at the CPD. He was a good colleague and very supportive and helpful in the development of our first LEND application." –Dr. Judith Holt, CPD. "I have worked with Richard since he became the Director of the Research and Evaluation Division at the CPD in 1989 to his retirement in 2010. Richard has had an amazing sense of humor, which he demonstrated on more than one occasion. The one that really comes to mind is when he bought me a cowboy stripper for my 30th birthday! That is still talked about by our staff! When Alzheimer's took most of his memory, I showed him the video of this event, and it brought a smile to his face and he replied,

"I remember." Richard was a great team leader, but what really impressed me was his compassion and devotion to the health and welfare of Native American children and children with disabilities. He was not only my boss, but more importantly, he was my friend." –Mary Ellen Heiner, CPD.